

The Face of Global Trade: Northwest Lions Foundation

When you think of exports, the first thing that comes to mind probably has to do with a company shipping a manufactured product to overseas customers in the hopes of making a profit. But exports can be so much more. The Northwest Lions Foundation for Sight and Hearing (NLFSH) is a leading exporter of corneas for transplant, which earned the organization the U.S. Department of Commerce's Export Achievement Certificate in 2003. The NLFSH is the only non-profit organization in the U.S. to receive this honor.

Founded by the Lions Clubs of Washington State in 1969, the NLFSH's vision is to be a global leader of innovative sight and hearing services creating humanitarian benefit. To carry out this vision, the organization has established the Northwest Lions Eye Bank (NLEB), which serves as a caretaker of sight, making sure that as many vision-impaired individuals as possible receive sight-restoring surgeries.

International Success

The Northwest Lions Eye Bank is the largest eye bank in the U.S., having helped over 25,000 people receive the gift of sight. Approximately 50% of donated tissue is sent to recipients overseas. In fact, the NLEB is the single largest cornea provider in Germany and provides almost one-third of all

tissue for transplants in Japan.

In addition to international distribution of cornea tissue, the NLFSH has donated intellectual property to assist international locations in the formation of self-sustaining eye banks in an effort to create local donor/tissue volume. With over 10 million corneal blind individuals around the world, establishing such

local centers is the only way to cure corneal blindness. NLFSH assisted in the creation of the Ramayamma Eye Bank in Hyderabad, India, which now provides more than 1,000 corneas a year for transplant thanks to NLFSH guidance. The center has since been recognized as a "center of excellence" for international

cornea surgeon training and eye banking.

Why Puget Sound?

The Puget Sound region offers numerous advantages as a location for the NLFSH. The area is home to generous citizens that strongly favor organ/tissue donation, helping this region have the largest volume of cornea tissue for transplant in the nation. The region's proximity to Asia is another boon, with the primary focus of the organization's international distribution is Asia, especially Japan. Such close proximity reduces shipping logistics and allows for quicker transport to overseas surgeons and recipients.

The NLFSH is yet another organization that exemplifies the vast web of relationships that entities in the Greater Seattle region have with international partners. Whether it is exporting corneas for transplant in Japan, placing environmental monitoring systems at the South Pole or educating foreign students at our community colleges and universities, the region is connected to the world in numerous ways. Continued engagement and commitment to international ties ensure continued prominence for the Greater Seattle region in the world.



Name: Northwest Lions Foundation

Location: Seattle, King County

Tissue Donations to International Recipients: Approximately 50%

Puget Sound Employees: 36

Countries Receiving Tissue: Numerous countries around the world, including Japan, Germany, Vietnam, Korea, Egypt, Ecuador and Nigeria

Puget Sound Enabler: Close proximity to Asia, support of Lions Clubs in Washington State